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Career decision making of Greek post secondary vocational students: the impact of parents and career decision making self-efficacy

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Abstract

A study was undertaken to determine the impact of both parents and career decision making self-efficacy on Greek post secondary vocational students' career decision making. Additional variables investigated were age, gender, parental educational background, career decision making ability and peer influence.
The students career decision self-efficacy was measured using the Career Decision Self-Efficacy-Short Form scale (CDSE-SF) developed by Betz Klein and Taylor (1996). Parental influence was measured by using a Career Decision Making Questionnaire developed by the researchers. Instruments were administered to148 students (58 female and 90 male). The results of the study indicated significant correlation between students' Career Decision Self-efficacy and career decision making, with respect to the educational level of the mother. Results also revealed a strong correlation between parental influence and career decision making ability. No gender differences concerning parental impact on decision making were found. Limitations of the study and issues of future research are discussed.

Keywords: Career decision self-efficacy; career decision making; parental influence; post secondary vocational students.

1. Introduction

The complex job market in Greece, the demand for workers with technical skills and the ability to manage information, make the career decision-making for young individuals more complex and more difficult than ever before (Hansen, 2001). The vocational schools respond to this complex job market, by providing young adults' occupational education and training aiming at the enhancement of job opportunities for them. Vocational technology education is the education that qualifies young people with technical skills and prepares students for occupational life (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). It has been suggested that career decision-making is a very difficult and complex process and in order for one to make a career decision, he/she has to integrate large amounts of information, involving the self and the vocational world (Gati et al., 1996). One aspect of the self that has been examined in relationship to career decision-making is self-efficacy, which is defined as an individual's belief in his or her ability to successfully perform a given task of behavior (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's self-efficacy theory has been applied to academic and career decision making through the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown & Hackett, 1994).The Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) provides a model for understanding a young

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adolescent's career development and choice (Lent et al., 1994). It puts an emphasis both on the cognitive variables (e.g. self-efficacy, outcome expectations and goals) and on the way these variables interact with other people and their environment (e.g. gender, ethnicity, and barriers).Betz and Hackett (1981) were the first to examine self-efficacy within the context of career decision-making and also introduced the term "career decision self-efficacy", which is defined as an individual's belief in his or her ability to complete tasks necessary to make career decisions (Taylor and Betz, 1983).

With regard to the SCCT, the purpose of this study was to examine the relationship among Greek vocational students' career decision self-efficacy, parental influence, and career decision making. It also examined the relationship between the demographics (gender and parental education background) and career decision self-efficacy and career decision making of students who attend post secondary vocational schools in Greece. The results of this study will have both research implications as well as practical implications for education. To date in Greece no study has examined career decision making and career decision self-efficacy among students who attend post secondary vocational schools. Therefore, this investigation is expected to contribute substantially to the enrichment of the existing literature.

2. Method

2.1 Sample

The sample consisted of 148 (58 female and 90 male) students of two vocational schools in Athens region. The age range was from 18 to 49 years of age. The mean age was 24.8 years old.

2.2 Instrument

The instruments used were: a) a demographic questionnaire, designed for the purpose of descriptive statistics asking a series of questions, regarding the participants' age, gender and parental educational lever, b) the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Short-Form (CDSE-SF) developed by Betz et al., (1996) which measures "an individual's belief that he/she can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decision" (Betz & Taylor, 2006, p.6) and it consists of 25 items divided into five scales (accurate self-appraisal, gathering occupational information, goal selection, making plans for the future and problem solving) and c) the Career Decision Making Questionnaire (CDMQ). This questionnaire was developed by the researchers to address several variables that associated and influenced the career decision making. The questionnaire consisted of 16 items. Each item was graded on a five point Likert scale in terms of the following scores: (1) Has no importance at all; (2) Has little importance; (3) Has medium importance; (4) Has very much importance; (5) Has the most importance. The investigators established instrument reliability for the CDSE-SF for this study. The reliability analysis provided a Cronbach Alpha Coefficient for total self-efficacy of 0.898. Betz & Taylor (2006) reported a Gronbach Alpha Coefficient of total self-efficacy 0.94

2.3 Procedure

The study was survey-based. The questionnaires were administered to the participants prior to lectures and the term self-efficacy was extensively explained. The questionnaire booklet took approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. Moreover the authors maintained an ethical practice and they conducted their study according to the standards for ethical treatment of human subjects. The anonymous nature of the study and the procedures for withdrawing from the study were also stressed.

3. Results

To examine the relationship between career self-efficacy and career decision making the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used. The results have been reported in table 1.

Table1. Pearson's (r) correlation coefficient between the Career Decision Making and the Career Decision Self-Efficacy

	Self appraisal	Occupational information	Goal selection	Planning	Problem solving	Total self efficacy	I have made my final an definite career choice.
Self appraisal	1	0,650(**)	0,645(**)	0,688(**)	0,576(**)	0,848(**)	0,278(**)
:cupational information	0,650(**)	1	0,618(**)	0,737(**)	0,606(**)	0,854(**)	0,243(**)
Goal selection	0,645(**)	0,618(**)	1	0,610(**)	0,606(**)	0,829(**)	0,255(**)
Planning	0,688(**)	0,737(**)	0,610(**)	1	0,635(**)	0,870(**)	0,209(*)
Problem solving	0,576(**)	0,606(**)	0,606(**)	0,635(**)	1	0,810(**)	0,206(*)
Total self efficacy	0,848(**)	0,854(**)	0,829(**)	0,870(**)	0,810(**)	1	0,283(**)
ıave made my final and lefinite career choice.	0,278(**)	0,243(**)	0,255(**)	0,209(*)	0,206(*)	0,283(**)	1

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

orrelation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Results showed that career decision making self-efficacy is significantly correlated with the career decision making (r=0.283, p=0.05). Further examination indicated that career decision making is significantly correlated with all five career self-efficacy sources, self-appraisal (r=0.278, p=0.05), occupational information (r=0.243, p=0.05), goal selection (r=0.255, p=0.05), planning (r=0.209, p=0.001) and problem solving (r=0.206, p=0.01).

An independent sample t-test indicated no significant relationship between gender and career decision self-efficacy. However, the relationship between the gender and two of the career decision self-efficacy sources were significant. Goal selection and planning have a strong relation with gender. The mean score of females on the variable goal selection (M=3.7, SD=0.6, p=0.038) was higher than that of the males (M=3.4, SD=0.8, p=0.038). Similarly, the mean score of females on the variable planning (M=3.6, SD=0.7, p=0.049) was statistically more significant than that of the males (M=3.4, SD=0.7, p=0.049)

A Kruscal-Wallis analysis of variance showed statistical relationship between the career decision self-efficacy and the educational level of mother (M=3.6, SD=0.5, p=0.024). Mothers with university degree (M=3.7, SD=0.6, p=0.024) presented to be the most influential. On the other hand, no significant relation was found between the career decision self-efficacy and the educational level of the father.

To examine the relationship between career self-efficacy and career decision making ability the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used (table 2.). Results revealed that there was significant correlation between career decision making ability and parental influence. Additionally, from the two parents, mother (r=0.711, p=0.001) had a higher influence than the father.

Table2. Pearson's (r) correlation coefficient between the Career Decision Making and the parents' influence

	I have made my final and definite career choice.	**My parents had the greatest influence in my career choice.**	**My father had the greatest influence in my career choice.**	**My mother had the greatest influence in my career choice.**
I have made my final and definite career choice.	1	0,620(**)	0,060	-0,014
My parents had the greatest influence in my career choice.	0,620(**)	1	0,660(**)	0,711(**)
My father had the greatest influence in my career choice.	0,060	0,660(**)	1	0,470(**)

My mother had the greatest influence in my career choice.	-0,014	0,711(**)	0,470(**)	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

No significant correlation was found between career decision making ability and gender of the students. However, the results revealed that both parents seemed to have influenced female students (M=3.3, SD=1.4, p=0.03) more than male ones (M=2.6, SD=1.4, p=0.03). This study concluded that both parents' educational level uniquely influenced the career decision of students. However, students perceived that their father's education level had a greater influence than their mother's. Data from the Scheffé's method revealed that fathers who had finished elementary schools (M=4.4, SD=0.9, p=0.028) showed the greatest influence on students compared to fathers who had finished vocational schools (M=2.8, SD=1.1, p=0.028).

4. **Discussion**

This study tried to explore the effect of career decision self-efficacy and the effect of parents on the career decision making of students who attend post secondary vocational training schools in Greece. The researchers were also interested in the impact of gender and parental educational background on career decision making of the young adults. The results revealed that career self-efficacy of the students was relatively strong and levels of self-efficacy were significantly predictive of levels of career decision. These results come to an agreement with past research which has also shown that a significant relationship exists between career decision self-efficacy and career decision making (Betz et al., 1996). All five sources of career-self efficacy were shown to be significantly correlated to career decision making.

Regarding the relationship between gender and career decision self efficacy no significant statistical correlation was found. However, females scored slightly higher than males on all five sources measured on the CDSE-SF indicating a greater level of career decision making. This study does not support the findings of Betz and Hackett (1981). It agrees with Gianako's (2001) research that reported higher scores for females than males in CDSE-SF for planning and goal selection.

Results revealed significant statistical relationship between the education level of mother and the career decision self-efficacy. Past research was not available on the effect of parental educational level on career decision self-efficacy therefore more evaluation is required.

The study indicated significant relation between parental influence and career decision making which is consistent with past research literature (Kniveton, 2004). It also revealed that mothers had a higher influence than fathers do. This comes to an agreement with past research (Otto, 2000). However, Poulter (2006) found that fathers had a more significant impact on their children's career choices. Regarding the parental influence and gender, there was no significant correlation. Additionally, both parents had an influence on the female students more than the male ones. These findings are consistent with past research ones (Jacobs et al., 2006). Concluding, students of the sample perceived that the father's education level had a greater influence than mother's on their career decision making ability.

Limitations of the study included that the research was conducted at two post secondary vocational schools in Athens area and findings are limited to the specific population and no generalization of the results is allowed. Other students of interest might include students of Lyceum and students from private institutions. Another potential limitation of the study was that the survey was conducted at one time, which might have affected the consistency of the results. The best approach would be to collect longitudinal data (Holland, 1997).

Based on the findings produced by this research and their relationship to the review of related literature, more work is needed in order to further understand the relationship among career decision self-efficacy, parental influence and post-adolescent students' career decision making. The first step may be to replicate this study after addressing the limitations discussed above. Furthermore the researcher could use another tool to examine different variables such as parental authority, economic status and number of children in the family variables. Another step would be to collect longitudinal data. This could help both researchers and students to fully understand the career decision making and its impact on their future work lives.

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